

Jack Anderson

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Vesco Case Papers 'Reconstructions'

In a strange twist to an unusual case, we have determined that the controversial documents linking White House intimates Hamilton Jordan and Charles Kirbo to the Robert Vesco influence scandal were "reconstructions."

Under intensive cross-examination, some of the principals admitted to us that the original documents were lost and were reconstructed from memory. "We were trying to reconstruct what really happened," explained one source.

This casts a cloud, nevertheless, on the authenticity of the allegations that Jordan and Kirbo were involved with the Georgia influence peddlers. The latter allegedly collected \$10 million worth of Vesco's prime stock to help the international swindler with his Washington extradition problems.

Jordan's boyhood buddy, Spencer Lee IV, now an Albany, Ga., attorney, acknowledged that he had accepted \$10,000 to intervene with Jordan in Vesco's behalf. But both Jordan and Lee insisted that the approach was never made.

Lee said he backed out of the venture after a heart-to-heart talk with another White House friend, Richard Harden, on Feb. 8 last year. As both recalled the conversation, Lee confessed that he had been offered "a large sum of money" to arrange a meeting with Jordan. But both agreed that Lee should drop the idea, they said.

Seven days later, Harden reported the plot to buy White House influence to President Carter. Strangely, the president did not inform the Justice Department directly of this. Nor did

he ask Harden to report on it to law enforcement officials. Instead, the president wrote a terse note to Attorney General Griffin Bell, urging: "Please see Spencer Lee from Albany when he requests an appointment."

According to spokesmen, the president has no recollection of the incident. Bell never saw the note and Lee never requested the appointment.

Kirbo also told us he cannot recall any contacts with the influence seekers, although his office records show that on Jan. 13 last year he met with Lee and the instigator of the plot, R.L. Herring. The next day, the pair flew to Costa Rica to discuss the \$10 million with Vesco.

We have authenticated a number of the details of the tale. But we are convinced that the crucial letters and telephone messages, implicating Jordan and Kirbo, were duplicated from recollections and flight logs.

Our sources insist that the original documents actually existed but were lost. We have verified some of the telephone messages by checking with the callers. But the fact that the documents were reconstructed damages their reliability.

The documents were authenticated for us by Herring's former secretary, Gerolyn Hobbs, who described in detail how she had typed and mailed the controversial letters. We checked her out with friends and neighbors who described her as truthful and reliable. She also impressed us as a guileless young person.

Under oath in federal court, she stuck to her story. But we have reason to believe the documents she identi-

fied on the witness stand were not copies but reconstructions.

On the eve of her testimony, however, we were told she was distraught. We, therefore, telephoned her. In a broken voice, she told our associate Les Whitten: "It was all a mistake! It was all a mistake!" He asked whether she wanted to change her story. But she just repeated: "It was all a mistake!"

Nevertheless, she testified before a federal judge that she had typed and mailed the disputed letters to Jordan and Kirbo. We have now informed her of our new findings and have asked whether she wants to retract her testimony. She backed down only slightly. "[The Jordan-Kirbo] letters are similar to the ones I typed," she said. She denied that she had reconstructed any documents.

We had assured White House press secretary Jody Powell, meanwhile, that we sought only the truth about the Vesco scandal and would try as hard to disprove as prove the allegations.

We became suspicious last week after examining a new batch of documents from our sources. One simply didn't look right. We checked it out and concluded it was not authentic.

We immediately began cross-examining our sources until one finally admitted that some of the documents had been recreated. Then we confronted other sources who confirmed what had happened. We had to promise not to identify them in public, but we persuaded them to repeat their statements to the FBI. We have now put FBI agents in touch with them.